



# H1N1 Provider Briefing

Date: November 18, 2009  
To: All Healthcare Providers  
From: Director of Health, David R. Gifford, MD, MPH  
Re: Information on H1N1 in Rhode Island

**Local Influenza Activity Level:** Widespread<sup>1</sup>; H1N1 predominant circulating strain

**Rhode Island**<sup>2</sup>: 279 hospitalized cases, 7 deaths

**Sentinel Surveillance (% of visits due to influenza-like illness)**<sup>3</sup>: Rhode Island: 12.97%, New England Region: 9.6%, Nation: 6.3%

Surveillance data indicate that influenza-like illness (ILI) activity in Rhode Island appears to be decreasing at this time. Reports of ILI from sentinel surveillance sites have decreased in all five counties. According to HEALTH's web-based Realtime Outbreak Detection Surveillance System (RODS), the percentage of total emergency room visits for "fever/flu" syndrome has also decreased. Finally, fewer schools are currently reporting above-normal rates of school absenteeism. Flu activity and flu-related hospitalizations still remain high nationwide for this time of year, and it is likely that activity may increase again in Rhode Island. People should continue to practice good prevention techniques such as washing their hands, covering their coughs and staying home when they are sick and should receive the H1N1 vaccine once it becomes available to them.

## **H1N1 school-based clinic vaccine uptake**

38,537 school-aged children have received the H1N1 vaccine over the first ten days of HEALTH's 28-day H1N1 school-based vaccination program. 75.75% of currently enrolled students received the vaccine in school clinics held during this time period.

## **H1N1 vaccination of post-partum women**

HEALTH has expanded H1N1 vaccination of pregnant and post-partum women in obstetric practices to include all post-partum women up to **six** months post-partum. Providers are asked to use the remaining H1N1 vaccine in their offices for post-partum women up to six months post-partum, any remaining pregnant women, or any newly pregnant women. For more information about administering the vaccine to post-partum women, please see the memo sent out today to prenatal care providers:

<http://www.health.ri.gov/news/H1N1Advisories/H1N1VaccinationOfPostPartumMothers.pdf>.

## **Second doses of H1N1 vaccine**

In general, providers should administer the second dose of H1N1 vaccine for children younger than 10 years of age after January 1, 2010. This is to ensure that all children are able to receive their first doses of the H1N1 vaccine before the start of the new year. Preliminary evidence suggests that one dose of the vaccine will provide protection, even to children under the age of 10. As vaccine supply allows, second doses may be administered earlier as part of routine scheduled office visits or in response to parental concerns.

## **Reporting doses of H1N1 vaccine administered**

All vaccine providers are reminded to submit reports of H1N1 vaccine administered electronically on a weekly basis to HEALTH. Reporting doses administered is a federal requirement. HEALTH monitors these reports

<sup>1</sup> Rhode Island reported Widespread activity for the week of November 1 to November 7, 2009. Influenza is circulating in all 5 regions of the state. For details see <http://www.health.ri.gov/flu/about/surveillance/>.

<sup>2</sup> Confirmed and probable H1N1 hospitalizations and deaths since September 1, 2009

<sup>3</sup> Influenza-like illness activity reported by 26 sentinel surveillance sites from November 1 to November 7, 2009

closely and makes decisions about vaccine allocation, redistribution between practices, and changes in priority groups based on the uptake of vaccine in each of your practices. For reporting instructions and to report doses administered, please see the H1N1 vaccine provider website at <http://pandemic.health.ri.gov/h1n1/>.

#### **Update for pharmacists compounding Tamiflu for oral suspension**

HEALTH has met with the insurers regarding concerns around patients being incorrectly charged by pharmacies for the preparation of compounded Tamiflu suspension. The insurers indicated they have addressed this matter and that it should no longer be a problem. If you continue to have problems regarding this issue, please call the H1N1 Information Line at 401-222-8022.

#### **Vaccination planning assistance available to H1N1 vaccine providers**

HEALTH understands that the burden of vaccinating large numbers of patients against H1N1 has stressed some providers. Pediatricians and family physicians who need help planning for ways to administer the vaccine to their pediatric patients may call Virginia Paine at 222-4602. Providers who are vaccinating pregnant and post-partum women may call Barbara McNeilly at 222-4640 for planning assistance.

#### **Influenza vaccine safety**

As this year's flu season continues, many patients will turn to their doctors as trusted sources of information about the H1N1 vaccine and its safety profile. HEALTH has prepared some materials to help providers answer patients' questions and engage them in informed discussions about the safety and effectiveness of the H1N1 vaccine. These materials will be sent to providers this week and posted to HEALTH's website at <http://www.health.ri.gov/flu/for/providers/>.

**The H1N1 vaccine is just as safe as the seasonal flu vaccine.** It has been manufactured, tested, and licensed using the same process and facilities used for seasonal flu vaccines. Vaccination is the best way to prevent illness from H1N1 and to prevent spreading the virus to people at high risk of flu-related complications. To read more about H1N1 vaccine safety, see:

- <http://www.health.ri.gov/news/H1N1Advisories/H1N1FluVaccineSafety.pdf> (HEALTH)
- [http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/vaccine\\_safety\\_qa.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/vaccination/vaccine_safety_qa.htm) (CDC)
- <http://www.fda.gov/BiologicsBloodVaccines/Vaccines/ApprovedProducts/ucm181950.htm> (FDA)

#### **Posters promoting vaccination available on HEALTH's website**

Numerous posters encouraging vaccination for pregnant women, children, and others are available to download and print from HEALTH's website at <http://www.health.ri.gov/flu/about/prevention/> (Look for the section titled "Educational Resources"). Materials in other languages are available on HEALTH's website at <http://www.health.ri.gov/flu/languages/>, and other free educational resources on seasonal and H1N1 flu are available on CDC's website at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/freeresources.htm>.

#### **Resources**

- HEALTH at <http://www.health.ri.gov>;
- Archived provider briefings and regular news updates: <http://www.health.ri.gov/news/flu/>
- H1N1 Information Line (M-F 8:30am- 4:30pm) 401-222-8022
- H1N1 email address [h1n1@health.ri.gov](mailto:h1n1@health.ri.gov)
- <http://www.flu.gov>